

State and Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals

SIGNIFICANT POINTS

- An excellent economy has led to budget surpluses in many State and local governments, allowing for increased spending on programs and employment.
- State government has a larger percentage of executive and professional specialty occupations, while local government employs a higher share of service and production workers.

Nature of the Industry

State and local governments provide vital services to their constituents, such as transportation, public safety, health care, education, utilities, and courts. Excluding the education and hospital sectors, State and local governments employ about 7.2 million workers, placing them among the largest employers in the economy. Almost two-thirds of these employees work for local governments, such as counties, cities, special districts, and towns. (Jobs of State and local government employees who work in education are described in the *Career Guide* statement on *Educational Services*; those employed in hospitals are covered in the *Health Services* statement.)

In addition to the 50 State governments, there are about 87,000 local governments, according to the Bureau of the Census. These include counties; municipalities, including villages, towns, and cities; townships; special districts; and school districts. Of the local governmental units, about 3,000 were county governments; 19,400 were municipal governments; 16,600 were townships; 13,700 were school districts; and 34,700 were special districts. Illinois had the most local government units, with over 6,800; Hawaii had the fewest, with 19.

In many areas of the country, citizens are served by more than one local government unit. For example, most States have *counties*, which may contain various municipalities such as cities or towns, but which also often include unincorporated rural areas. *Townships*, which do not exist in some States, may or may not contain municipalities and often consist of suburban or rural areas. Supplementing these forms of local government, *special district* government bodies are independent, limited purpose governmental units that usually perform a single function or activity. For example, a large percentage of special districts manage the use of natural resources. Some provide drainage and flood control, irrigation, and soil and water conservation services.

The Council of State Governments reports that State and local governments' responsibilities were augmented in the 1990s through "devolution," the practice through which the Federal Government turns over to State and local governments the development, implementation, and management of programs. Welfare reform typifies devolution in practice, with States receiving considerable leeway to devise programs that meet their needs as a result of the 1996 Congressional reform act that provided block grants to States. As the relationship between levels of government continues to change in the coming decade, so will the nature of services provided by State and local governments.

Working Conditions

Working conditions vary by occupation and, in some instances, by size and location of the State or local government. For example, chief executives in small jurisdictions may work less than 20 hours a week; in larger jurisdictions they often work more than 40 hours per week. Chief executives in large jurisdictions work full time year round, as do most county and city managers. Most State legislators work full time only when in session, usually for a few months a year, and work part time the rest of the year. Local elected officials in some small jurisdictions work part time.

Firefighters' hours are longer and vary more widely than those of most workers. Many professional firefighters are on duty for several days in a row, working over 50 hours a week. They often eat and sleep at the fire station. Following this long shift, they are then off for several days in a row or for the entire next week. In addition to irregular hours, firefighting can involve the risk of death or injury. Some local fire districts also use the services of volunteer firefighters, who tend to work shorter, regularly scheduled shifts.

Law enforcement work is also potentially dangerous. The injury and fatality rates among law officers are higher than in many occupations, reflecting risks taken in apprehending suspected criminals and responding to various emergency situations such as traffic accidents. Most police and detectives work 40 hours a week, with paid overtime when they testify in court or work on an investigation. Because police protection must be provided around the clock, some officers work weekends, holidays, and nights. Many officers are subject to call any time their services are needed and are expected to intervene whenever they observe a crime, even if off duty.

Most driver/operator jobs in public transit systems are stressful and fatiguing because they involve dealing with passengers, tight schedules, and heavy traffic. Bus drivers and subway operators with regular routes generally have consistent weekly work schedules. Those who do not have regular schedules may be on-call and must be prepared to report for work on short notice. To accommodate commuters, many operators work "split shifts," for example, 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., with time off in between.

A number of other State and local government jobs also require weekend or night work. Because electricity, gas, and water are produced and used continuously throughout each day, for example, split, weekend, and night shifts are common for utility workers. Also, some social services workers are on the job evenings, weekends, and holidays, such as those who

work in residential care facilities, which must be staffed 24 hours a day.

Employment

State and local governments, excluding education and hospitals, employed about 7.2 million people in 1998. Local government employed the largest number of workers, accounting for 2 out of every 3 (table 1).

Table 1. Wage and salary employment in State and local governments, excluding education and hospitals, 1998

(Employment in thousands)

Jurisdiction	Employment	Percent
State and local	7,152	100.00
Local	4,804	67.2
State	2,348	32.8

Occupations in the Industry

Service occupations comprised the largest share of employment in State and local governments, accounting for almost 29 percent of all jobs (table 2). Of these, protective service occupations and firefighters were the largest occupations. Administrative support occupations accounted for about 20 percent of employment, and professional specialty and managerial occupations accounted for 16 and 13 percent, respectively.

Local governments had a smaller share of managerial and professional specialty occupations than State governments. Local governments, on the other hand, had a larger share of service occupations, particularly firefighting and law enforcement occupations (see chart).

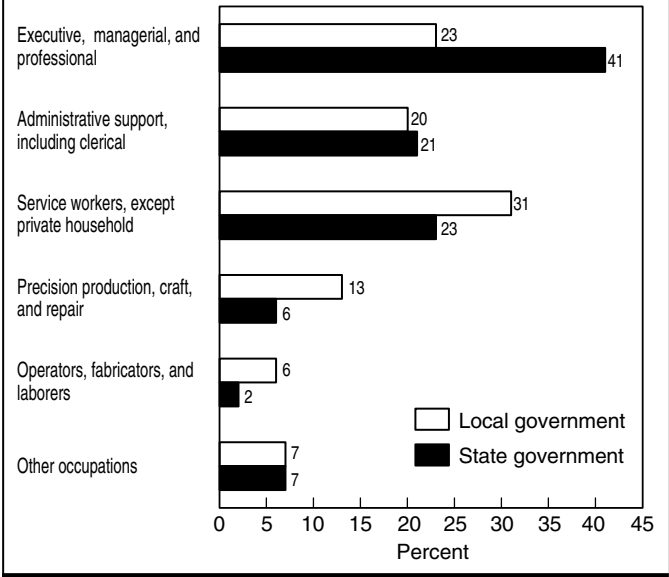
State and local governments employ people in occupations that are found in nearly every industry in the economy, including managers, engineers, computer occupations, secretaries, and technicians. Certain occupations, however, are mainly or exclusively found in governments, such as government chief executives and legislators, tax examiners, urban and regional planners, judges, magistrates, police officers, and deputy sheriffs.

Chief executives and legislators establish government policy and develop laws, rules, and regulations. They are elected or appointed officials who either preside over units of government or make laws. Chief executives include governors, lieutenant governors, mayors, and city managers. Legislators include State senators and representatives, county commissioners, and city council members.

Inspectors and compliance officers enforce a wide range of laws, regulations, policies, and procedures designed to protect the public. They enforce regulations covering health, safety, food and restaurant cleanliness and licensing, and standards of weights and measures in commerce. *Tax examiners, collectors, and revenue agents* determine tax liability and collect past-due taxes from individuals or businesses.

Urban and regional planners draft plans and recommend programs for the development and use of resources like land and water. They also propose construction of physical facilities like schools and roads under the authority of cities, counties, and metropolitan areas. Planners devise strategies outlining the best use of community land and identify where residential, commercial, recreational, and other types of development should be located.

Local governments employ fewer executive, managerial, and professional workers than State governments



Judges arbitrate, advise, and administer justice in a court of law. They oversee legal processes in courts and apply the law to resolve civil disputes and determine guilt in criminal cases. *Magistrates* resolve criminal cases not involving penitentiary sentences and civil cases involving damages below a sum specified by State law.

Social workers counsel and assess the needs of clients, refer them to the appropriate sources of help, and monitor their progress. *Welfare eligibility workers* and *interviewers* interview and investigate applicants and recipients to determine eligibility to receive, or continue receiving, welfare and other types of social assistance. *Human services workers'* duties vary with specific job titles. These workers include social service technicians, case management aides, social work assistants, residential counselors, alcoholism or drug abuse counselors, mental health technicians, child abuse workers, community outreach workers, and gerontology aides.

Court clerks prepare dockets of cases to be called, secure information for judges, and contact witnesses, lawyers, and attorneys to obtain information for the court. *Municipal clerks* draft agendas for town or city councils, record minutes of council meetings, answer official correspondence, keep fiscal records and accounts, and prepare reports on civic needs.

Firefighters control and extinguish fires, assist with emergency medical treatment, and assist in recovery from natural disasters such as earthquakes and tornadoes. *Fire inspectors* inspect public buildings for conditions that might present a fire hazard.

Police officers and detectives have duties that range from controlling traffic to preventing and investigating crimes. They maintain order; enforce laws and ordinances; issue traffic summonses; investigate accidents; give evidence in court; and apprehend, arrest, and process prisoners. State and local *correctional officers* guard inmates in jails, prisons, or juvenile detention institutions. *Sheriffs* and *deputy sheriffs* enforce the law on the county level and may serve legal documents for the court system. *Bailiffs* keep order in courts.

Busdrivers and *subway car operators* pick up and deliver passengers at prearranged stops throughout their assigned routes. Operators may collect fares, answer questions about schedules and transfer points, and in some cases announce stops.

Training and Advancement

The education level and experience needed for workers in State and local government varies by occupation. For most professional jobs, a college degree is required. To obtain an entry level urban or regional planning position most State and local government agencies require 2 years of graduate study in urban and regional planning or the equivalent in work experience. To become a judge, particularly a State trial or appellate court judge, one usually is required to be a lawyer. About half of all State judges are appointed and the other half are elected in partisan or nonpartisan elections. Most State and local judges serve fixed terms, ranging from 4 or 6 years for limited jurisdiction judges to 14 years for some appellate court judges.

A master's degree in public administration is widely recommended, but not required, for city managers. They may gain experience as management analysts or assistants in government departments working with councils and mayors. After several years, they may be hired to manage a town or a small city and eventually become manager of larger cities.

Voters elect most chief executives and legislators, so local support is very important. Volunteer work and community services are valuable ways to establish vital community support. Those elected to these positions come from a variety of backgrounds, but must conform to age, residency, and citizenship regulations. Advancement opportunities for most elected public officials are limited to other offices in the jurisdictions in which they live. For example, a local council member may run for mayor or for a position in State government, and State legislators may decide to run for governor or Congress.

Most applicants for firefighting jobs must have a high school education or its equivalent and pass a civil service examination. In addition, they need to pass a medical examination and tests of strength, physical stamina, coordination, and agility. Experience as a volunteer firefighter or as a firefighter in the Armed Forces is helpful, as is completion of community college courses in fire science. Recruits study firefighting techniques, fire prevention, local building codes, emergency procedures, and the proper use of rescue equipment. Firefighters may be promoted depending on written examination results and job performance.

Bus drivers must comply with Federal regulations that require drivers who operate vehicles designed to transport 16 or more passengers to obtain a commercial driver's license from the State in which they live. To qualify for a commercial driver's license, applicants must pass a written test on rules and regulations and demonstrate they can operate a commercial vehicle safely. For subway and streetcar operator jobs, applicants with a high school education have the best chance. In some cities, prospective subway operators are required to work as busdrivers for a specified period of time. Successful applicants are generally in good health, possess good communication skills, and are able to make quick, sound judgments. Because busdrivers and subway operators deal with passengers, they need an even temperament and emotional stability. Driving in heavy, fast-moving, or stop-and-go traffic and dealing with passengers can be stressful.

Table 2. Employment of wage and salary workers in State and local government, excluding education and hospitals, by occupation, 1998 and projected change, 1998-2008

(Employment in thousands)

Occupation	1998		1998-2008 Percent change
	Employment Number	Percent	
All occupations	7,152	100.0	11.8
Service	2,043	28.6	19.5
Police patrol officers	431	6.0	32.1
Correctional officers	361	5.0	37.9
Fire fighters	228	3.2	5.5
Cleaning and building service occupations, except private household	124	1.7	1.7
Personal service occupations	104	1.5	10.4
Police and detective supervisors	102	1.4	13.3
Sheriffs and deputy sheriffs	91	1.3	34.2
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants	71	1.0	10.8
Administrative support, including clerical	1,445	20.2	1.6
Office clerks, general	281	3.9	18.1
Secretaries	197	2.8	-10.8
Word processors and typists	111	1.6	-31.2
Office and administrative support supervisors and managers	103	1.4	7.7
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	85	1.2	-9.7
Dispatchers, police, fire, and ambulance	77	1.1	6.0
Adjusters, investigators, and collectors	76	1.1	-3.0
Professional specialty	1,134	15.9	18.7
Social workers	219	3.1	35.2
Teachers, librarians, and counselors ..	128	1.8	10.6
Recreation workers	109	1.5	11.9
Lawyers and judicial workers	105	1.5	10.0
Social and human service assistants	84	1.2	21.3
Engineers	75	1.1	10.6
Registered nurses	82	1.1	10.3
Executive, administrative, and managerial	936	13.1	8.4
Inspectors and compliance officers, except construction	84	1.2	12.1
Government chief executives and legislators	79	1.1	2.8
General managers and top executives	76	1.1	7.6
Accountants and auditors	78	1.1	3.2
Precision production, craft, and repair	757	10.6	8.0
Highway maintenance workers	143	2.0	11.2
Blue-collar worker supervisors	109	1.5	11.1
Maintenance repairers, general utility	89	1.2	-10.2
Water and liquid waste treatment plant and system operators	80	1.1	12.0
Construction equipment operators ...	75	1.1	11.2
Operators, fabricators, and laborers ...	358	5.0	8.2
Helpers, laborers, and material movers, hand	166	2.3	8.4
Motor vehicle operators	140	2.0	7.0
Technicians and related support	316	4.4	7.3
Health technicians and technologists	133	1.9	9.1
Technicians, except health and engineering and science	94	1.3	5.6
Engineering and science technicians and technologists	55	0.8	10.1
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and related	116	1.6	11.5
Laborers, landscaping and groundskeeping	79	1.1	11.7
All other occupations	47	0.7	9.5

Police departments in most areas require applicants to be U.S. citizens of good character, at least 20 years old, and able to meet rigorous physical and mental standards. Police departments increasingly encourage applicants to take college courses, and some require a college degree. Many community and junior colleges, as well as colleges and universities, offer programs in law enforcement or administration of justice. Officers usually attend a local or regional police academy program, which includes classroom instruction in constitutional law and civil rights, State laws and local ordinances, and accident investigation. They also receive training in patrol, traffic control, using firearms, self-defense, first aid, and emergency management. Promotions for police officers are highly influenced by scores on a written civil service examination and subsequent performance evaluations by their superiors.

Earnings

Earnings vary by occupation, size of the State or locality, and region of the country. As in most industries, professionals and managers earn more than other workers. Earnings in the occupations having the largest in employment State and local government appear in table 3.

Table 3. Median hourly earnings of the largest occupations in State and local government, 1997

Occupation	State government	Local government	All industries
Police patrol officers	\$15.76	\$17.65	\$17.68
Social workers, except medical and psychiatric	14.80	15.44	14.01
Fire fighters	14.14	15.10	14.73
Correction officers and jailers	13.14	14.27	16.63
Sheriffs and deputy sheriffs	—	13.10	13.11
Secretaries, except legal and medical	11.21	11.50	11.00
Highway maintenance workers...	11.63	11.08	11.24
Typists, including word processing	10.82	10.75	10.51
General office clerks	9.66	9.74	9.10
Recreation workers	—	7.95	7.69

As reported by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), median annual salaries in 1998 of selected executive and managerial occupations in local government appear in table 4. The ICMA also reported in its Municipal Year Book for 1998 that according to a 1997 survey, median annual entrance level base salary for firefighters was about \$28,000, while the maximum base salary level median was \$35,000. According to the same survey, police officers were paid a median entrance salary of \$38,100 a year. Earnings vary by region and the size of the police and fire departments. Larger departments generally pay higher salaries.

According to the American Public Transit Association, in early 1999 local transit busdrivers in metropolitan areas with more than 2 million inhabitants were paid an average top hourly wage rate of \$17.90 by companies with over 1,000

employees, and \$16.00 by those with fewer than 1,000 employees. In smaller metropolitan areas, they had an average top hourly wage rate of \$14.70 in areas with between 250,000 and 500,000 residents, and \$12.60 in areas with resident populations below 50,000. Generally, drivers can reach the top rate in 3 or 4 years.

According to data from the American Public Transit Association, in early 1999 the top-rate full-time hourly earnings of operators for commuter rail ranged from \$17.50 to \$28.70; operators for heavy rail from \$17.50 to \$26.00; and operators for light rail from \$13.60 to \$21.90. Transit workers in the northeastern United States typically had the highest wages.

Employer-provided benefits—including health and life insurance and retirement benefits—are more common among State and local government employees than among workers in the private sector.

Table 4. Median annual salary for selected executive and managerial occupations in local government, 1998

Occupation	City	County
City manager	\$70,000	\$76,392
Engineer	59,777	56,623
Information services director	56,989	59,928
Assistant chief administrative officer	56,788	51,723
Chief administrative officer	55,411	56,343
Chief financial officer	55,347	48,892
Economic development /planning director	54,575	48,000
Fire chief	52,645	45,586
Chief law enforcement official	52,407	45,226
Public works director	50,493	56,196
Personnel director	50,543	47,710
Health officer	46,556	49,656
Parks and recreation director	45,960	42,840
Human services director	43,332	54,984
Purchasing director	43,255	40,290
Chief librarian	39,456	40,694
Clerk	36,800	34,626
Treasurer	36,072	34,234
Chief elected officials	5,000	21,011

Source: International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

Outlook

State and local government employment is projected to increase about 12 percent during the 1998-2008 period, slower than the 15 percent growth projected for all sectors of the economy combined. Employment growth will stem from the rising demand for services at the State and local levels. An increasing population and State and local assumption of responsibility for some services previously provided by the Federal Government is fueling the growth of these services. Despite the increased demand for the services of State and local governments, employment growth will be dampened by budgetary constraints due to reductions in Federal aid, especially at the county level, and resistance from citizens to tax increases.

Employment in nearly all major occupational groups is expected to grow in State and local government through the year 2008. For example, demand for most protective service occupations will grow faster than average, spurred by rising demand for law enforcement and correctional officers to oversee the increasing population of convicted offenders. According to the National League of Cities' 1998 survey, over three-fourths of all cities reported that they had increased spending on public safety. Employment of other service

workers, production workers, laborers, and operators will grow at a rate slower than average, however, in response to governments' increased tendency to contract out some services. The National League of Cities also reported that cities increased their contracting out of jobs by more than 20 percent in 1998.

Increased demand for services should produce slow growth in employment of motor vehicle operators and helpers, laborers, and material movers through the year 2008. However, rapid increases in demand for some services—such as those for the elderly, mentally impaired, and children—will spur faster than average growth of social and social and human service assistants. Finally, urban and regional planners are expected to experience average growth, as the use of planning is promoted by population growth in city and State government.

Slow growth is projected in executive, administrative, and managerial occupations and administrative support occupations. Employment of government chief executives and legislators will change little through the year 2008 because the number of these positions generally remains fairly stable. Employment change occurs in rare situations, such as when a small town switches from a volunteer chief executive to a manager or paid mayor. Employment in administrative support occupations in State and local government is expected to increase very little and employment in many occupations is projected to decline, as the increasing use of personal computers by professionals and managers continues to reduce the need for secretaries, typists, word processors, and data entry operators.

Sources of Additional Information

Individuals interested in working for State or local government agencies should contact the appropriate agencies. City,

county, and State personnel and human resources departments, and local offices of State employment services have applications and additional information.

Other information about careers in government is available from:

- The Council of State Governments, P.O. Box 11910, Research Park Drive, Lexington, KY 40578-1910. Internet: <http://www.csg.org>
- International City Management Association (ICMA), 777 North Capital NE., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002. Internet: <http://www.icma.org>
- International Personnel Management Association, 1617 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA. Internet: <http://www.ipma-hr.org>
- National Association of Counties, 440 First Street NW., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20001. Internet: <http://www.naco.org>
- National Association of State Personnel Executives, P.O. Box 11910, Iron Works Pike, Lexington, KY 40578-1910. Internet: <http://www.statesnews.org/naspe/rolesnfn.html>
- National League of Cities, 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20004. Internet: <http://www.nlc.org>

Information on many occupations commonly employed by State and local government may be found in the 2000-01 *Occupational Outlook Handbook*:

- Correctional officers
- Firefighting occupations
- Government chief executives and legislators
- Lawyers and judicial workers
- Police and detectives
- Social and human service assistants
- Urban and regional planners